WebBuyer

SITE REVIEWS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

BY KEVIN SAVETZ

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<Tech Shopping

aberdeeninc.com

Targeting the savvy consumer who craves speeds and feeds, **Aberdeen** offers extensive specs on a wide variety of computers and accessories. Shoppers can see side-by-side comparisons of motherboards the company carries.

accessmicro.com

Need a gift for that special someone who has everything? Check out **Access Micro,** which stocks tons of items ranging from T1 routers to complete desktop systems. The help desk and hardware guide provide aid to first-time visitors, and the clearance area offers returned items and old inventory for below wholesale cost.

www.applied-computer.com

Selling PCs and supplies since 1984, **Applied Computer** promises to beat any advertised price. The company features an 80,000-product inventory; check the site's list of the 1,000 most popular ones. But beware of the handling fee tacked onto orders under $200.

blackbox.com

Get connected! Specializing in network products, **Black Box's** extensive 900-page catalog of storage, cabling, and surge-protection products—plus other connectivity accessories—can be viewed online or off.

buy.com

This monstrous, multifaceted site sells computers, electronics, books, movies, and more. With a whopping 850,000 items, **Buy.com** offers a price-matching policy on most of them.

cdw.com

CDW offers an enormous array of hardware and software for business. Create side-by-side comparisons in many product categories, and search out dollar-saving deals on the rebates-and-coupons page.

compgeeks.com

Revenge of the nerds, indeed! Shop the **Computer Geeks Discount Outlet** for new, discontinued, and refurbished computer gear. It's a trove for the do-it-yourselfer piecing together a desktop system. The site features low prices and complete specs on every product.

compuplus.com

Comp-U-Plus offers free technical support and a 30-day money-back guarantee on all the peripherals it sells. The catalog isn't exactly earth-shattering in scope, but the prices are reasonable and plenty of name brands are represented.

compusa.com

The well-organized **CompUSA** rounds out the usual selection of PC hardware, peripherals, and accessories with areas devoted to electronics and gadgets. The frugal won't want to overlook the site's outlet section.

computergate.com

In business since 1991, **Computer Gate** promises a 30-day satisfaction return policy on its products, which include peripherals and built-to-order PCs. Check out the Quick Index: You'll never have to poke around for the right product again.

computers4sure.com

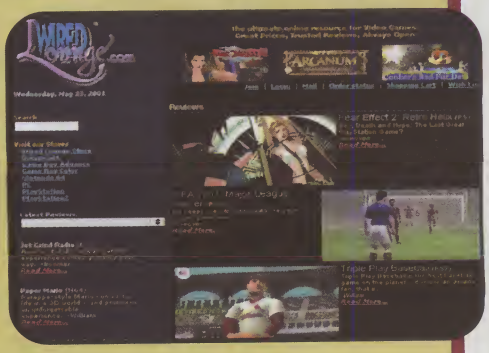
In the 19 well-stocked departments at **Computers4Sure.com** you'll find a broad spectrum of products including networking equipment, projectors, PDAs, scanners, and more. Bargain hunters can quickly sniff out deals on the Clearance pages.

AUGUST

COMPUTER SHOPPER site OF THE month

wiredlounge.com

Here's a site hard-core gamers will want to plug in to. Billed as "the ultimate online resource for video games," **Wired Lounge** serves up games for Dreamcast, Game Boy, Nintendo 64, PC, PlayStation, and PS2. The site specializes in recent releases. Check it out for the latest and greatest titles, but don't bother looking for last year's games—you won't find them here.



This sleek-looking site rates and reviews games, and offers plenty of screenshots to whet your appetite. And the reviews read like they've been written by actual gamers, not jaded professional reviewers. They're also refreshingly honest—even though the site sells games, the reviews will tell you when a title isn't up to par and why.

Other features include message boards, a bountiful archive of cheat codes, and links to recent gaming news. The site also offers free e-mail accounts, a nice thought but a bit out of place in this context. It's clear, nonetheless, that this Web shop wants to grow into a community for gamers—and it has plenty of potential to succeed.

SITE REVIEWS

computershopper.com

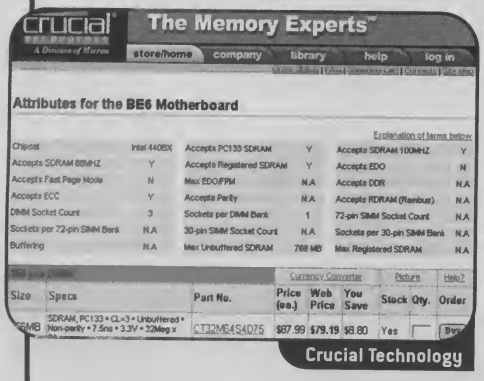
Computer Shopper's own piece of cyberspace, **computershopper.com,** provides access to product reviews, interactive guides to choosing a desktop or a notebook, and How to Buy sections for the most popular product categories. The site can also help you find an ISP, ASP, or Web host.

www.computersurplusoutlet.com

You're just crazy enough to build your own desktop system, aren't you? Then you'll feel right at home at **Computer Surplus Outlet,** where you'll find closeouts, overstocks, refurbished equipment, and liquidation items. You can even stumble upon the occasional assembly-required Pentium system for less than $100.

crucial.com

One of the largest providers of memory upgrades on the Web, **Crucial Technology** offers free shipping on RAM upgrades for 11,000 computer systems. The site's Memory Selector helps buyers find the right product, and the company backs its memory with a lifetime warranty.



cyberwarehouse.com

If you can't pass up a bargain-basement sale (and don't mind waiting a few days for your item to ship), **CyberWarehouse** is definitely for you. The site offers a small selection of PCs, monitors, and peripherals.

dalco.com

Dalco Electronics stocks everything from motherboards to monitors, ships them the day you order, and includes a 30-day guarantee. Bargain hunters will want to start with the specials found on the home page, which change regularly.

dartek.com

With a roster of more than 100,000 products, **Dartek** peddles an impressive selection of hardware, software, networking equipment, and office furniture. Well-designed features include printable spec sheets, customers' product ratings, a product-watch feature, and a frequent-buyers' club.

dirtcheapdrives.com

If you can store data on it, this site sells it. **Dirt Cheap Drives** offers hard drives, CD-ROM and DVD hardware, and drive arrays, with detailed technical information about each product. This decade-old company also stocks mounting kits, media, and accessories.

ebatts.com

Is your notebook or UPS battery running out of juice? **eBatts.com** specializes in batteries for laptops, uninterruptible power supplies, mobile phones, and camcorders. Check out the site's battery tips area for info about battery life, maximizing performance, and recycling old batteries.

ecost.com

The **eCost.com** catalog spans the full range of PC hardware and software, including ready-to-use systems, peripherals, accessories, and applications. The site features fastidious organization and personalized product recommendations.

egghead.com

Egghead.com shoppers can lose themselves in the site's hardware, software, office-product, and electronics superstores. Corporate users will find volume pricing, leasing information, and software licensing in the business center.

elinux.com

At **eLinux** you'll find a whopping 42,000 hardware and software products. The site is so serious about Linux, many of its desktop and notebook systems don't come bundled with that "other" OS. Special offerings include Linux news and a community forum.

emscomputing.com

EMS Computing offers a 40,000-product catalog, an easy-to-navigate site, and low shipping charges. A monthly newsletter delivers informative tips on choosing and using computer accessories.

fwdepot.com

FireWire Depot serves up IEEE 1394 (FireWire) stuff for your compatible computer. The site's selection includes drives, cases, cables, and IEEE 1394 upgrade cards. The buyer's guide provides insightful answers to frequently asked fiery questions.

harddrive.com

Pack rat? **HardDrive.com** has your storage solution. Choosy shoppers will find extensive choices in IDE, SCSI, and IEEE 1394 (FireWire) drives, along with other peripherals. For fashion-forward computer users, the site offers an array of black PC components, from cases to scanners. After all, black *does* go with everything.

igo.com

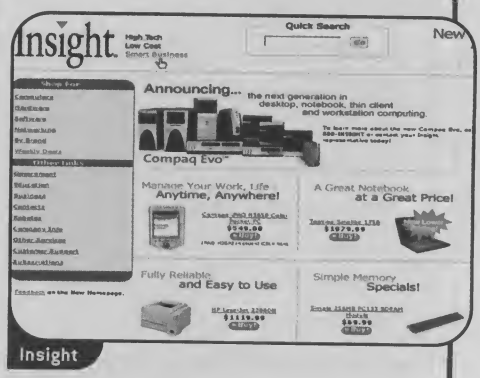
iGo calls itself a "mobile technology outfitter." Use the site to outfit your cell phone, laptop, or PDA with chargers, batteries, and other necessary accessories. The iGo Alerts feature delivers free customized news to your portable device.

inkjets.com

New inkjet cartridges are expensive, and refill kits are messy. For an inexpensive middle ground, try **Inkjets.com,** which sells remanufactured and third-party ink cartridges at a fraction of the cost of name-brand ink.

insight.com

With more than 110,000 items for sale, **Insight** offers an impressive catalog of hardware and software. Customized sites are available for shoppers in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany.



jandr.com

Hardware, software, home-office products, and appliances abound at **J&R Computer World,** the New York City-based superstore famed for its selection and, ahem, "brusque" service. Avoid the attitude with this online version, which specializes in cameras, both digital and traditional film models. Product help is available via e-mail, online chat, and phone.

lanblvd.com

Wrestling with your old router? Network card not working? **LanBlvd.com** specializes in networking products. You'll find hubs, routers, interface cards, wireless stations, and other essentials for your LAN.

laptoptravel.com

Laptop Travel is road-warrior heaven! The site sells portable-computing and international-travel gear, including electrical adapters, modem converters/couplers, and security accessories. You'll find traditional and "camouflaged" laptop carrying cases, laptop RAM, and storage add-ons.

linuxcentral.com

Find your alternative at **Linux Central.** The site stocks Linux-friendly hardware, commercial software, and operating-system CD-ROMs. A selection of Linux-compatible T-shirts, hats, and ties will help you flash your alternative tendencies in public.

mcglen.com

McGlen Micro's specialized searches can help you find memory and other accessories compatible with your computer, printer, or copier. With the Build-To-Order Configurator, shoppers can design a custom system, which the company will configure and ship to you in two days.

SITE REVIEWS

megahaus.com

MegaHaus bills itself the "drive authority," offering a wide variety of storage solutions, including hard drives, DVD drives, RAID arrays, and CD-mastering products.

mei-microcenter.com

MEI-Micro Center offers new and refurbished desktops from Compaq, eMachines, Hewlett-Packard, and PowerSpec. You'll also find a small selection of peripherals. Rummage through the bargain bin for deals on closeouts, refurbished units, and overstocks.

memman.com

All of the desktop and laptop memory sold at **Memory Man** carries a lifetime warranty, and the site's reference guide offers RAM-configuration info for all name-brand computers. The site also sells processors, motherboards, hard drives, heat sinks, and more for intrepid system builders.

memory4less.com

Memory4Less.com offers low prices on a wide variety of RAM, including older types you may have been pulling your hair out to find. If you don't know the memory requirements of your computer or digital camera, this site will clue you in.

microx-press.com

MicroX-Press offers detailed information about most of the products it sells. The site will send you an e-mail whenever a product's price drops below a limit you set. Customers are invited to rate and review products they've tried.

www.mobile-mania.com

Quickly head to **Mobilemania.com** for digital cameras, e-mail devices, PDAs, cases, and adapters. You'll find the bountiful selection a haven for folks (like you) who are always on the go.

mobileplanet.com

MobilePlanet is home to a gaggle of high-tech tools and toys for mobile professionals. The selection includes handheld and notebook computers, PDAs, wireless-communication products, and travel-size printers and scanners.

mobilizenow.com

On the go? Gear up at **MobilizeNow,** where you'll find the gadgets you need, including GPS receivers, portable radios, and cellular and PDA accessories. Tell the site what country you're headed for, and it will spit out a list of appropriate adapter plugs, phone adapters, and voltage converters.

monitoroutlet.com

From inexpensive 14-inchers to elegant (and pricey) flat-panel LCD screens, **Monitor Outlet** offers a wide range of computer displays. The site sells units from 24 manufacturers, with quick-comparison pages to help you choose. The catalog also includes specialty monitors such as touch screens, wide-aspect-ratio displays, and projectors.

motherboardexpress.com

Oh, Mama. **Motherboard Express** was made for PC-building connoisseurs. Shoppers can filter the selection of 100-plus boards by manufacturer, chipset, processor type, case type, onboard controller, or number of CPUs.

motherboards.com

With a wide selection of motherboards from nine manufacturers, do-it-yourselfers will revel in handpicking the perfect innards for their new PCs at **Motherboards.com.** Order a motherboard and CPU together, and the company will configure and test them for you.

www.mwave.com

In addition to PC systems and peripherals, **Multiwave Direct** stocks notebook accessories, videoconferencing equipment, and network tools. Top sellers, "blowout specials," and rebate forms are a click away from the home page.

neutronet.com

Neutron carries thousands of computer systems and peripherals from nearly 400 manufacturers and distributors. A handy toolbox offers easy access to best buys, help for first-time buyers, and a massive manufacturer directory.

newegg.com

You won't have to shell out big bucks or scramble for hardware at **NewEgg.com**. Peck at the site's listings of new products and top sellers, then take a

PDA Hardware and Software

handango.com

Handango offers hundreds of commercial software downloads for Palm OS, Pocket PC, Windows CE, and RIM handhelds. Newbies can start with the site's tutorials, glossary of handheld terms, and recommendations for first-time buyers.

palmopensource.com

You don't have to be a software developer to love **Palm Open Source.** The site is also perfect for free-software addicts, offering links to hundreds of free programs for your Palm.

www.pdamart.com

Predictably, **PDAMart** specializes in PDAs. The online catalog includes Palm, Visor, Psion, Rex, and other electronic organizers, along with smart phones and pagers. Cases, add-on cards, and wireless gear round out the selection.

www.pdapanache.com

PDA Panache offers replacement styli, customized for your particular handheld model. The selection includes funky translucent plastic styli and elegant stylus/pen combinations. Even if you don't need another stylus, read the site's informative FAQ about keeping your PDA's touch screen clean and scratch-free.

pdastreet.com

No matter which handheld you use, there's something for you at **PDAStreet.** This multifaceted site offers reviews, software downloads, user tips, and news for Windows CE, Palm, Visor, Psion, and RIM users. You'll find used equipment in the classified ads.

styluscentral.com

Mom always said it isn't nice to point, but she didn't know how pleasant it can be with a good stylus. **StylusCentral** offers a panoply of styli to use with your PDA, from cheap replacements to handsome executive models. The selection also includes PDA cases.

the-gadgeteer.com

The Gadgeteer, a site run by two self-proclaimed lovers of electronic gizmos, offers hundreds of reviews of handhelds and accessories—cases, styli, and hardware add-ons. Check the site's message boards for lively discussions about PDAs, handheld games, and MP3 players.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BILL RIESER

SITE REVIEWS

crack at the specials. Order carefully—the 15 percent restocking fee might make you squawk.

notebooksuperstore.com

Devoted exclusively to portable computers, **NotebookSuperStore.com** sells more than 100 different laptop models from nine manufacturers. You'll see technical details about each model, and a comparison tool helps you zero in on the best portable for you.

nxgen.com

Next Generation's Web site is densely packed with prebuilt computers and peripherals ranging from cables to graphics cards. The selection is huge, and the site provides full specs and plenty of details about each product.

onvia.com

Onvia.com, a business-to-business computer outlet, offers a handful of features that distinguish it as a small-business resource, including a services marketplace, buying guides, and active community forums.

outpost.com

Outpost.com sells 170,000 products—a full range of computer hardware, plus cameras, electronics, and innovative specialty products from partner companies.

palmgear.com

Users of handhelds will appreciate the extensive selection of free and commercial programs downloadable from **PalmGear HQ.** Shoppers can buy PDA hardware and accessories, including carrying cases and hip styli. Sign up for an e-mailing list to receive information about new software, news, and user tips.

pcconnection.com

PC Connection offers nifty bargains on a colossal variety of PC and Macintosh products. Smart Selectors ease the searching process for shoppers looking for turnkey systems, cameras, printers, monitors, or memory to fit specific guidelines.

www.pcliquidator.com

The getting's good at **PC Liquidator,** a site that offers clearance, refurbished, and overstocked hardware and software. The inventory is always changing and usually inexpensive. You can find many hardware choices for under $10—some for less than $5.

pcmall.com

Shoppers at **PC Mall** receive free lifetime technical support on the site's vast selection of computers, hardware, and software. The site's business-solutions forum offers corporate leasing and volume pricing. Apple-heads can find all their favorite Macintosh products at the **Mac Mall** sister site ***(www.macmall.com)***.

pczone.com

PC Zone stocks an impressive selection of all things PC. You'll find links to a clearance area and other stores: **Mac Zone** and **Electronics Zone.** Printable rebate coupons can save you some cash.

provantage.com

Provantage offers PC products from more than 1,000 manufacturers, including a large selection of books and training materials. The site's Personal Tracking List feature lets customers build a list of product bookmarks, then monitor prices and availability.

www.sg3d.com

Sunway Graphics specializes in PC graphics cards, offering a wide selection of powerful 3D accelerators. You'll also see a smaller selection of other graphics products: TV-tuner cards, videoconferencing equipment, and video-capture cards.

shopper.cnet.com

The **CNET Shopper** search engine takes the guesswork out of finding a deal on hardware, software, and accessories. The price-drop-alerts feature will send you e-mail when the cost of a coveted gadget falls. (CNET Networks is *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

sparco.com

Looking for that something extra? Check out **Sparco.com's** list of products that come bundled with "free stuff." The site stocks more than 130,000 products, and it offers a list of discounted items for students and faculty members of academic institutions.

Blank Media

cd-dvd-supplies.com

CD-DVD-Supplies.com sells brand-name and unbranded CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, and DVD-RAM media, as well as 3.5-inch diskettes. (Remember them?) The selection of fruit-colored CD-Rs will make a bold statement compared with everyday monochromatic discs. The site shows the unit cost for every product, making price comparisons easy.

www.cd-recordable.com

The **CD-Recordable Factory Store** is a U.S. company that manufactures the discs it sells. The easy-to-navigate site offers a massive variety of CD-R discs, including "colorless" (all-silver), black, and tinted discs. You can also shop for CD-packaging and storage accessories.

www.cdrfaq.org

For burning questions about CD-R media, check the **CD-Recordable FAQ.** The site offers impartial advice about choosing CD-R discs that will work with your burner and stand the test of time.

www.discmarket.com

In addition to a bevy of blank CD-Rs, **The Disc Market** sells high-speed duplicators and CD-label printers to give your finished discs a professional look. Storage and mailing supplies round out the selection.

mediasourceinc.com

Media Source sells a wide variety of removable media, including CD-Rs, optical discs, Zip and Jaz disks, and DATs. The selection of writable CDs includes brand-name and generic disks, business-card CD-Rs, and printable media. Also on offer are 3.5-inch and 5.25-inch bulk floppies, as well as hard-to-find data cartridges.

www.mediasupply.com

Check **Media Supply** for a great selection of CD-R discs, including brand-name, bulk, and business-card-size discs. You'll also see a small selection of automated disc duplicators, and low- and high-end label printers. The site offers CD-R duplication, printing, and silk-screening services, as well.

tape.com

Cassette House sells DAT tape, blank cassettes, recordable MiniDiscs, and CD-Rs. The videotape selection includes VHS, S-VHS, and Mini-DV tape—just about everything but Betamax.

SITE REVIEWS

ssdonline.com

At **State Street Direct,** shoppers will discover a huge selection of computers and imaging products. Digital-camera shoppers will find many items of interest, including customized comparison charts.

staples.com

Yeah, they've got that. **Staples'** Web site offers a liberal price-matching policy on computer accessories, software, and office supplies. If you order similar items often, you can set up personalized shopping lists. The company can occasionally take its time shipping items out to you, though, so beware.

2for1inkjet.com

Searching for incredible deals on printing supplies? Check out **2 For 1 Inkjet,** which offers two-for-one prices on toner and ink cartridges for every brand of inkjet and laser printer, copier, and fax machine. Beware: Shipping can be slow, and there's no order-tracking feature.

3dfxcool.com

A cool computer is a happy computer. **3DfxCool** specializes in fans, heat sinks, and other cooling devices for your CPU, monitor, hard drive, and other components. The catalog of products includes thermal compounds and alarms to alert you when things get too hot.

tccomputers.com

In business since 1988, **TC Computers** sells fully configured systems, motherboards, and peripherals. The company's specialty is motherboards; buyers can choose to have motherboards and processors pre-assembled and tested for no extra charge.

tcwo.com

Thompson's Computer Warehouse Outlet offers only a small selection of computer products. You may find only a dozen monitors or four CD-ROM drives, but the prices are fantastic.

techstore.com

TechStore.com offers hardware in dozens of categories and highlights monthly top sellers. The site also sells software, ranging from productivity suites to children's titles.

thenerds.net

With no misgivings about the tech-savvy of their company or customers, **TheNerds.net** offers 60,000 computer products, ranging from cables and connectors to graphics cards, at its fast and friendly site. The liberal 30-day return policy will protect you from getting stuck with the wrong product.

tigerdirect.com

TigerDirect's site offers 40,000 products, including custom-built computers that are tested and shipped within 48 hours. Up for a little adventure? Order a build-it-yourself custom PC kit, and let the fun begin!

truedataonline.com

True Data Technology stocks an exceptional catalog of motherboards, hard drives, and other upgrades. The site also features communication essentials for businesses, including DSL equipment and telephony products.

usbstuff.com

USB Stuff specializes in Universal Serial Bus-equipped gadgets, including digital cameras, CD-RW drives, printers, modems, hubs, and input devices. But its poor site design makes navigation difficult. A sister site at ***www.firewirestuff.com*** stocks IEEE 1394-compatible hardware.

warehouse.com

The four "warehouses" under **MicroWarehouse's** roof sell PC hardware, Mac products, datacomm components, and supplies. The site accepts corporate, educational, and government accounts, and offers business leases on many products.

Direct PC Vendors

www.alienware.com

Alienware won't abduct your pets, but the company can build you a high-end gaming machine, desktop video system, or high-performance workstation. Cases are available in a rainbow of out-of-this-world colors.

buyabs.com

Exceptional customer support on custom-configured desktop and notebook systems is the goal at **ABS Computer Technologies.** All systems include a 30-day money-back guarantee. Some computers are available with Linux preinstalled.

buy-atlas.com

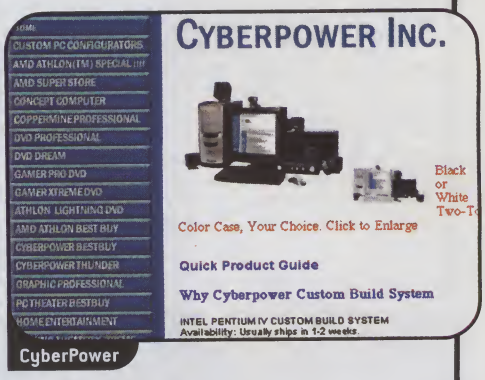
Atlas Micro offers desktop PCs built around Pentium, Celeron, and AMD processors. Buyers can use drop-down menus to create a custom configuration and are protected by a reasonable 30-day return policy.

compaq.com

Three arms of **Compaq Computer's** site offer computers for everyone. See the Compaq AtHome division ***(athome.compaq.com)*** for home and home-office systems, DirectPlus ***(www.directplus.compaq.com)*** for business PCs and servers, or the Compaq Factory Outlet Superstore ***(compaqfactoryoutlet.com)*** for big bargains.

csd.toshiba.com

The Web home for **Toshiba's** stylish portables and desktop systems doesn't offer as many build-to-order options as some other sites, but it's loaded with plenty of extended-warranty and lease options.



cyberpowerinc.com

Each **CyberPower** PC includes a three-year warranty and 30-day money-back guarantee. The site's service area includes downloadable drivers and lifetime tech support.

dell.com

Dell Computer's electronic storefront has always led the way in ease of use. The site is jam-packed with detailed information that makes it a snap to match a machine to your needs. Each system is configurable to the nth degree via drop-down menus, and you can get quick access to online support customized for your PC.

www.fosa.com

Fosa's built-to-order notebook computers include a 15-day money-back guarantee with no restocking fee and lifetime technical support. We just wish the site didn't depend so heavily on the Macromedia Flash plug-in. Sheesh!

www.fujitsu-pc.com

Fujitsu's site focuses on portable computing, including notebook PCs and pen-based tablet computers. Each computer includes several warranty options. A trade-in program offers cash back on your old computer when you upgrade to certain models.

gateway.com

One of the biggest players in online computer sales, **Gateway's** enormous and informative site sells custom-built desktops and portables, delivering

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them on time 98 percent of the time, according to BizRate.com.

hpshopping.com

At this site, **Hewlett-Packard** sells its lines of desktop and notebook computers, handhelds, PDAs, digital cameras, and printers. The site makes repeat purchases simple for businesses and individuals.

ibm.com/products

ShopIBM sells business and home computers, notebooks, servers, thin clients, networking equipment, and peripherals. The build-to-order option allows buyers to customize a new desktop PC. Linux is an option on laptop models.

idot.com

From low-cost budget models to powerful monster machines, **iDot** offers customized desktop and notebook computers with a good return policy.

kaypro.com

You can design your own desktop system at **Kaypro,** but the custom configurator doesn't offer as much flexibility as we'd like. The site's notebook area carries a selection of Fujitsu portables.

microexpress.net

Micro Express offers built-to-order desktop and notebook computers featuring AMD and Intel processors. Each system includes a 30-day guarantee and a two- or four-year warranty. Business leases are available.

micronpc.com

One of the largest direct PC vendors, **Micronpc.com** sells computers to home-office users, larger businesses, government buyers, and buyers outside the United States. The Factory Outlet offers refurbished and discontinued systems.

www.mwmicro.com

Go MidWest, young man. **MidWest Micro** delivers down-home, custom-configured desktops, servers, and notebook systems. The site's Service Center is exemplary, with a troubleshooting knowledge base and driver downloads that cater to your particular system.

nutrend.com

Custom-configure a home or business desktop PC at **NuTrend Computer Products.** The company stocks machines running your choice of Intel or AMD processors. Each system comes with a three-year warranty.

Digital Video Recorders

avsforum.com

The **AV Science Ultimate Forum** is a busy community of home-theater buffs, with message boards devoted to all of the major digital video recorders. Users will find an enticing mix of official news and assistance from the recorder manufacturers, and unofficial news, tips, and hacks from fellow users.

www.certasaurus.com/tivo

What started in 1999 as one user's online notes about his experience with TiVo has blossomed into an insightful news and commentary site about personal video recorders. **Marc's TiVo Experience** offers price comparisons, buying tips, and notes about the industry.

replaytv.com

At the official site for the **ReplayTV** digital video recorder, shoppers will find an interactive demo, technical specs, and online documentation. The HookUp Buddy will show you how to add the unit to your home theater. Check out the MyReplay TV feature ***(my.replaytv.com)***, which allows you to control your unit from any Web browser.

tivo.com

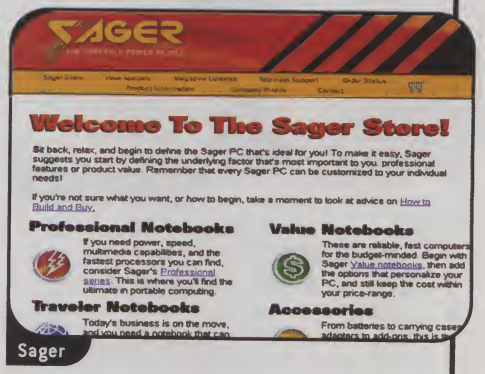
Here's the official site for the **TiVo** digital video recorder. Potential customers can find out how it works and try the online demo. The site's TiVo Fun section offers tips from users and tricks for power users.

ultimatetv.com

Microsoft's **UltimateTV** is the newest video recorder on the market, but it only works with the DirecTV satellite television service. The site offers an interactive demonstration, answers to prospective shoppers' questions, and pricing information.

www.polywell.com/onlinestore

Polywell Computers may not be a household name, but the company offers desktops, workstations, and servers that are worth a look. You'll find massive custom-configuration options.



www.sagernotebook.com

Specializing in notebook computers, **Sager** offers a variety of options, from budget machines to speedy multimedia units. Service includes a 72-hour repair-turnaround guarantee and lifetime free tech support. Business leases are available.

shopprostar.com

Each computer in **ProStar Computer's** line of notebook PCs is backed by a 30-day money-back guarantee, a speedy-repair promise, and free tech support. The handy comparison tool helps buyers zero in on the best model.

sonystyle.com

SonyStyle sells Sony's line of VAIO desktops and notebooks, plus digital cameras, displays, and storage devices. The Xtras Direct section of the site carries add-ons for PCs, digital cameras, and other equipment.

store.apple.com

Apple Computer's well-designed site allows you to custom-configure any Macintosh computer and offers a wide array of Mac-compatible software and accessories. Beware the one-click ordering feature, however—using it may be a bit too convenient for impulse buyers!

www.tiny.com

Britain's favorite direct computer seller is now targeting us Yanks. **Tiny Computers'** line of prebuilt desktop and notebook PCs includes models for professionals and first-time buyers.

unitedmicro.com

Take home a preconfigured Intel- or AMD-based PC, or start with a bare-bones system and let **United Micro** install the components of your choice.

www.winbook.com

Focusing exclusively on portables, **WinBook Computer** offers machines with a 30-day money-back

guarantee, a one-year warranty, and free technical support. Ironically, some of the site's best deals, the daily "Web specials," can only be ordered by phone.

PC Resources

consumerreview.com

ConsumerReview.com helps consumers research products before they buy. The site provides more than 200,000 reviews and ratings for tech gadgets and products for the home, car, and kids.

dcresource.com

The **Digital Camera Resource Page** is an unbiased, comprehensive source of information for digital-camera buyers and owners. Shoppers can glean necessary info from the FAQ page, buyer's guide, message boards, and reviews.

dealnews.com

Deal yourself in! **Dealnews** is a fantastic buyer's guide that reports on low-price specials in Web stores. Updated daily, the site discovers deals that range from tempting to nearly impossible to resist. Check out sister site **Dealmac** for Mac-oriented gotta-haves.

dealtime.com

DealTime.com is an independent comparison-shopping service. The site aggregates prices from hundreds of online merchants, auctions, and classified sites. Also, 21st-century shoppers can compare prices by cell phone or wireless PDA, thanks to the site's mobile service.

expertcity.com

Expertcity.com promises live, 24-hour computer assistance from real human beings. When you pose a question, experts across the Internet bid for your business. Read their profiles, compare prices, then choose the expert you like.

56k.com

See **56K.com** for a primer on 56kbps modems, a price shopper for buying a modem at the best price, and downloads of the latest firmware. Read the special report on the new V.92 modems.

SITE REVIEWS

www.ftc.gov

The **Federal Trade Commission's** Web site is packed with useful information about consumer fraud and how to avoid it—online and off. If you've had a problem with a merchant, you can file a complaint with the FTC Bureau of Consumer Protection online.

gomez.com

Gómez.com offers ratings and customer reviews of e-commerce sites in two dozen categories, ranging from Web-based computer stores to drugstores, apparel vendors to online brokers. Check the ratings on ease of use, customer confidence, and cost.

www.linhardware.com

Will that sleek new laptop run Linux? Find out with the **ZDNet Linux Hardware Database,** where users share their experiences regarding which hardware's compatible with Linux—and which isn't. For the stuff that is, download the appropriate driver and put it to work. (ZDNet is owned by CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

motherboards.org

Motherboard HomeWorld is packed with motherboard news, reviews, specifications, and tips. Its comprehensive database of 1,200 products includes driver information, technical details, and overclocking hints.

nextag.com

NexTag is a sophisticated buying service that can help frugal shoppers find the lowest possible prices on computer equipment, electronics, books, music, and videos. Entering your ZIP code allows NexTag to calculate shipping and tax for accurate pricing.

pricepda.com

PricePDA.com is a price-comparison engine for buyers of personal digital assistants, accessories, and software. Users can access the site anywhere via WAP-enabled cell phones.

resellerratings.com

Want a second opinion before you share your credit-card number with an unfamiliar online merchant? Check **ResellerRatings.com,** which provides customer evaluations of online hardware vendors. Take reviews with a grain of salt: We've seen dozens of negative messages posted by one (very unhappy) person.

techsupportalert.com

Tech Support Alert helps computer users locate the best tech-support information on the Net. You'll find reviews of free and pay-for-support sites, plus how-to guides for Windows users.

usb.org

Check **USB.org** for technical information about the Universal Serial Bus, as well as answers to frequently asked questions and information about devices that use it. You'll find information for shoppers as well as developers.

windrivers.com

WinDrivers.com is a comprehensive archive of drivers and DLL files for hard drives, sound cards, scanners, and other hardware. The site also provides links to antivirus updates and BIOS upgrades.

Software Sites

beyond.com

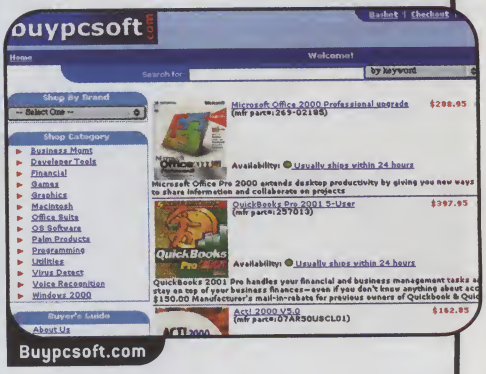
Beyond.com presents software for PC, Mac, and PDA users. In addition to traditional boxed titles, the site sells downloadable software from major publishers and a respectable selection of computer hardware. (CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company, is an investor in Beyond.com.)

bigclearance.com

You don't have to pay big money for a big box of big-name software. **BigClearance.com** sells "current version software at clearance prices," most with free shipping. The site carries a smallish selection of titles from Borland, Intuit, Macromedia, Microsoft, and other major publishers.

buycheapsoftware.com

The name sums it up. **Buy Cheap Software** offers a relatively small selection—about 300 titles—at deep discounts. The site does sell programs from well-known publishers, including Adobe, Corel, Lotus, and Microsoft.



buypcsoft.com

Buypcsoft.com offers software for Windows PCs in categories from business management to voice recognition. It's an efficient site with a good selection and high ratings among previous and current customers.

chumbo.com

In addition to tons of Windows programs and DVDs, **Chumbo.com** features a Linux Store that sells applications for the popular alternative OS.

SITE REVIEWS

cws.internet.com

Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications List is the ultimate one-stop download site for Internet software, including Web-development tools, browsers, and chat clients. You'll find comprehensive file lists, ratings, and extensive reviews. A free newsletter provides summaries of new software releases.

download.cnet.com

CNET Download.com will help you find shareware and free software, linking to thousands of PC, Mac, Linux, and PDA titles. Well-written newsletters and down-to-earth reviews help you to locate the perfect program. (CNET Networks is *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

dragon.ca

When we think of Canada, three things come to mind: Mounties, ice hockey, and **The Dragon's Den.** This popular site sells video games for the PC, PlayStation, and other consoles. They're quite used to selling to us Yanks—prices are available in U.S. dollars, and shipping is very affordable.

ebgames.com

The online arm of the ubiquitous Electronics Boutique stores, **EBGames.com** is a video-game player's paradise, offering over 3,000 products. Its home page highlights new releases, coming-soon titles, and top sellers. Bargain hunters will love the long list of preowned titles available at significant discounts.

freewarefiles.com

Windows users who want software without having to spend any money can start at **Freeware Files.com.** This site features quick links to the most popular giveaways.

fscentral.com

PC and Mac aviation addicts are cleared for landing at **Flight Sim Central.** The site offers a hangar full of flight-simulator software, plus specialty hardware like flight yokes and simulated avionics.

jumbo.com

Jumbo is the perfect name for this monstrous file archive, which features programs for sale, commercial-application demos, shareware, and freeware. Jumbo Guides offer articles on backing up, sharing MP3s, and other computing topics.

linux2order.com

Linux2order offers more than 10,000 Linux and open-source applications. You can pick and choose software, or grab a prebuilt distribution. Get your software on a $5 custom-burned CD, as a free standard download, or as a high-speed download for a subscription fee.

Researching and Buying a Car

autobytel.com

Autobytel.com is a one-stop shop for researching and buying a new or used car. You can compare prices and options, read reviews, then get a price commitment without haggling. The site uses a network of 5,000 dealers, so you can take a test drive and close the deal in person.

autotrader.com

Specializing in used cars, **AutoTrader.com** offers 1.5 million listings for preowned and new vehicles. Build a list of cars for sale in your local area or nationwide, limiting hits to a particular make, model, and year. Insurance and warranty quotes, as well as loan rates, are available.

autoweb.com

A full-service research and buying site, **Autoweb.com** offers an informative, haggle-free shopping experience. Related services include the ability to get an insurance quote, explore financing options, and check your credit report. You can place a classified ad to find a buyer for your old jalopy.

edmunds.com

The **Edmunds.com** car-buying guide is a free, unbiased source for automotive information. The site includes new-car reviews, insightful feature articles, and impartial advice about buying, selling, and financing. The appraisal tool will tell you what to pay for a used car and what to expect for your trade-in.

kbb.com

Use **Kelley Blue Book** to find the trade-in or used-car retail value of any car made since 1981. The site also offers previews of models coming soon to dealerships, and of concept cars that may never see a showroom floor.

www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/testing/ncap

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration wants to help you in **Buying a Safer Car.** Before you buy that new or used vehicle you've got your eye on, check this guide to find out how it performed in crash tests. The site also offers guides to choosing a safe car and reducing the chance of rollovers.

999central.com

The price is right at **999central.com,** which stocks 500 software and 200 DVD titles, most for $9.99. Educational, entertainment, and lifestyle applications are the most common.

softwareoutlet.com

Calling all cheapskates! Come check it out. **SoftwareOutlet.com's** a veritable virtual bargain bin. You'll find dirt-cheap apps—older versions, titles from defunct companies, or just plain funky stuff.

www.tucows.com

It's not just bovine bliss: **Tucows** is also an incredible archive of freeware and shareware. Plenty of local mirror sites keep the download process speedy. The category list and reviews make finding the software you seek a breeze.

zdnet.com/downloads

Dude, you'll need more bandwidth. Download shareware, freeware, and demos from **ZDNet Downloads.** The site offers daily software highlights and quick links to the week's most popular software. Every program is rated, reviewed, and checked for viruses, so your new software won't come with any unpleasant surprises. (ZDNet is owned by CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company.) ▼